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Responsibilities in the Farm Labor Program

Broadcast by Lt. Col. Jay L. Taylor, Deputy Administrator, War Food Administration, in the Department of Agriculture portion of National Farm and Home Hour, Tuesday, May 11, 1943, over stations associated with the Blue Network.

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KADDERLY: In Washington this time, we turn our attention to farm labor. As you know, that has been one of the biggest problems on the farm front. But a lot has been done toward solving it.

The man responsible for the national farm labor program is here in the studio. He is Lieutenant Colonel Jay L. Taylor, Deputy Administrator of the War Food Administration.

Colonel Taylor comes from down in the Southwest, in Texas and Oklahoma and New Mexico where he has some ranches and farms. He has handled some tough assignments in many other fields. The army had him speeding up production in some of the California plane factories. Then War Food Administrator Chester Davis--who feels that farm production is just as important as airplane production had Colonel Taylor come to Washington to handle the farm labor program. We've asked Colonel Taylor to report to you on the progress in meeting the farm labor problem. Colonel Taylor.

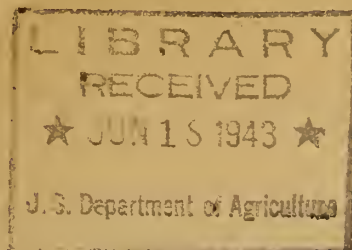
TAYLOR: Nobody can solve the farm labor problem from Washington. That responsibility rests right out there in the country where the problem is.

And the country has already come a long way toward solving it. I believe there is an adequate farm labor supply in the country and that it'll get the crops in--on time -- and tend them -- and harvest them. When I say "the crops," I mean all the crops called for by the big 1943 production goals. However, I should make one exception. In some of the fruit and vegetable areas, where the work is highly seasonal, there will be some local problems that may be serious. But the labor there will be supplemented by labor moved from one part of the country to another, including workers brought in from other countries. We are bringing in 50,000 Mexicans, 11,000 Jamaicans, 3,000 Bahamians.

But for most of the United States, out in most of the farm and ranch counties, the responsibility is right where it belongs.

Part of that responsibility is on the labor supply itself. Part of it is on the farmers. And part is on the local agencies out there in the country which will get the farmer and the labor together.

If the farmers, the people who can do farm work, and the local agencies do what I think they will, the problem will be pretty well solved. And I believe it'll be solved about 99 per cent in the country and about 1 per cent from Washington.



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TAYLOR- (continued): Now, what I mean by the share of the responsibility that belongs to the labor supply is this: There are hundreds of thousands of potential workers not now on farms, including townspeople and women and good strong boys, who are willing and able to work. They'll be working this summer--in the U. S. Crop Corps--probably three and one-half million of them at the peak of the season.

You're going to hear a lot about this U. S. Crop Corps before this war is won. The Crop Corps will include the Victory Farm Volunteers, and it will include the Women's Land Army, as well as the thousands of men from the cities and towns who will work full time or part time.

The Victory Farm Volunteers are the high school and college students--young, willing and able. They are playing a very important part. For instance, today, in Delaware a couple of Boy Scout troops along with their scout leaders are cutting the asparagus crop. They were dismissed from school to do this work. They have added that much to the nation's farm labor supply. There is no particular reason why I should mention this incident--because there were thousands of similar incidents last year, and there'll be many more thousands this year. This is a new source of labor--actually created by the emergency.

But it is only useful if this labor itself arises to the occasion and does the work. That is its responsibility.

I mentioned the responsibility that the farmer has. It's a big one. It is up to him to use this unusual labor, much of it inexperienced. It will be largely the farmer's own choice this year whether there will be a critical labor shortage or not. He can hire these available people, or he can refuse to hire them and watch them go to other employment. It's up to him.

But he will not get his share of this labor if he refuses to hire a young man because he is inexperienced. Remember that thousands of young men who were not experienced as farm-tractor drivers are now driving General Sherman tanks and flying bombers--and believe me that is skilled work too. It is the farmer's responsibility to be as willing to use this labor and teach it as the army and the war industries are.

The third part of the responsibility that I mentioned is that of the local agencies which have already worked out, in their states and counties and communities, the mobilizing programs and have already put these local programs into operation. I am referring to the county agent and the rest of the Extension Service, the United States Employment Service, and the Office of Civilian Defense. These agencies have developed successful programs--so successful that all we want to do here from Washington is to help them as much as we can--to keep on doing just what they have been doing in the way they have been doing it.

The experience they had last year and the effort they have made so far this year proves that they are on the right track.

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TAYLOR - (Continued): So I think that the question, after all, is not only where you can get more farm labor but how to make the best use of it.

You can do that by aiming at the 1945 production goals, planting up to your goals--plus whatever extra you think you can handle. We will need it all before this war is over.

KADDERLY: Farm and Home friends, in this review of the farm labor program you've heard Lieutenant Colonel Jay L. Taylor, Deputy Administrator of the War Food Administration. Colonel Taylor is the administrative head of the farm labor program.

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